

JSE

March 25, 1965

sage to the Congress on matters relating to the District of Columbia (House Document 86). In discussing the crime situation, the President stated that—

"Some control of firearms within the District is urgently needed. Legislation providing for the registration of pistols, which is an appropriate first step, will shortly be transmitted to the Congress by the Commissioners."

Existing law permits the responsible and law-abiding citizens to possess a pistol in his home or place of business without a license. The bill does not change existing law in this respect.

The principal purposes of the bill are two:

1. To require registration of pistols owned or possessed within the District of Columbia.
2. To forbid ownership or possession of pistols by persons having certain dangerous or irresponsible characteristics.

Meaningful criminal sanctions to enforce these requirements are contained in the bill.

The registration requirement is designed to put on record the identity of each pistol within the District of Columbia and of each person having ownership or possession of a pistol. This will, we believe, provide data which will aid the police in the solution of crimes committed with pistols (almost all crimes committed with firearms in the District of Columbia are committed with pistols).

Crimes committed with pistols in the District, as in other large cities of the United States, have been steadily on the increase in the past few years. The Commissioners and the Federal authorities believe that one factor has been the easy availability of pistols. J. Edgar Hoover, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, stated in June of 1963 that—

"The easy accessibility of firearms is a significant factor in murders committed in the United States today"

"Guns are by far the most lethal weapons used in assaults to kill—seven times more deadly than all other weapons combined."

We believe that an important step in reducing the crime rate is to provide tighter legal control over the acquisition, possession, and records of pistols.

Pistols were used in the District of Columbia in 24 homicides in fiscal year 1962. This number increased to 37 in fiscal year 1964. The number used in aggravated assaults in the 1962 fiscal year was 393. This number increased to 407 in the fiscal year 1964. The number of pistols used in robberies in fiscal year 1962 was 262, and in 1964 the number increased to 482. Thus, nearly 1,000 violent crimes involved the use of pistols in the fiscal year 1964. These statistics do not fully state the magnitude of the danger of pistols, since they measure only actual crimes of violence, taking no account of pistols carried illegally, which are instantly capable of violent use.

The major changes in the law proposed by title I of the bill would:

1. Require registration with the Chief of Police of pistols.
2. Provide criminal penalties for possession of unregistered pistols.

The major changes proposed by title II would:

1. Add new categories of persons prohibited from possessing pistols. These would be persons convicted of misdemeanors involving the use of pistols, persons under 21 years of age (except while actually engaged as a regularly enrolled member in the activities of an organization authorized to receive pistols from the U.S. Government), frequent offenders involved in drunken driving or habitual intoxication, and persons found to have mental disorders. Under existing law, only four categories of persons are prohibited from possessing pistols. They are (a) drug addicts, (b) persons convicted in the District or elsewhere of a felony, (c) persons con-

FIREARMS LEGISLATION IS NEEDED NOW

(Mr. MULTER (at the request of Mr. WILLIAM D. FORD) was granted permission to extend his remarks at this point in the Record and to include extraneous matter.)

Mr. MULTER. Mr. Speaker, I have today introduced three bills to increase control on the sale and use of firearms and other dangerous weapons.

The first of these bills would require the registration of pistols in the District of Columbia. It is similar to my bill, H.R. 637, which I introduced on January 4, 1965, and was transmitted to the Congress by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia to implement part of President Johnson's message on the District of Columbia contained in House Document 86.

The bill is explained in some detail in the following letter from Commissioner Tobriner which accompanied the draft proposal:

MARCH 16, 1965.

The Honorable THE SPEAKER,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. SPEAKER: The Commissioners of the District of Columbia have the honor to submit herewith a bill "To require the registration of pistols in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes."

This bill implements the President's mes-

March 25, 1965

COI

victed of prostitution, keeping a disorderly house, or vagrancy, and (d) persons not licensed to sell guns and convicted of violating the Dangerous Weapons Act.

2. Increase penalties for illegally carrying a pistol on one's person or possessing certain prohibited dangerous weapons, such as machineguns.

3. Increase from 48 to 120 hours the time for police to investigate the qualifications of a prospective purchaser of a pistol, before delivery may be made.

In developing the bill, the Commissioners had the close cooperation and assistance of Mr. David C. Acheson, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia.

The Commissioners most strongly urge enactment of the bill.

We have been advised by the Bureau of the Budget that this bill is consistent with the administration's objectives.

Sincerely yours,

WALTER N. TOBRINER,
President, Board of Commissioners,
District of Columbia.

The second bill that I have introduced today would amend the Federal Firearms Act to prohibit the mail-order sales of firearms to individuals by limiting firearms shipments in interstate commerce to shipments between importers, manufacturers and dealers. It also prohibits sales of all types of firearms to persons under 21 years of age except sporting rifles and shotguns. The bill contains a number of other provisions which I believe to be essential in the proper regulation of firearms and is calculated to implement part of President Johnson's attack on the problem of rising crime in this country. It is similar to my bill, H.R. 1110, which I introduced on January 4, 1965.

The third bill I have introduced today would impose special taxes on the importing, manufacturing and dealing in destructive weapons and would increase the rates of existing taxes.

Both of these latter proposals have been sponsored in the other body by our distinguished former colleague, the senior Senator from Connecticut.

I sincerely hope that the House Committee on Ways and Means, to which my bill H.R. 1110 and the two bills amending the Federal Firearms Act and National Firearms Act that I have introduced today, have been referred, will schedule hearings on these proposals in the very near future. Similarly, I hope that the Committee on the District of Columbia will schedule hearings on H.R. 637.